

*The Address—Mr. Mackenzie King*

fuller attendance in the house when we are dealing with important matters, and in much less discussion and help to avoid undue prolongation of the sessions.

I shall leave it to my colleagues in the government to take up other matters which have been referred to by my hon. friend (Mr. Graydon).

There is, however, one question which I shall necessarily have to deal with because it has become an issue in the country at the present time. The leader of the opposition stated that he noticed that the speech from the throne had to do with international organization—but that it made no special reference to what I presume he meant were the constitutional relations within the empire. My hon. friend himself made no statement on that important question. May I say to him that I think the country will wish to know where the Progressive Conservative party stands on the question raised of the relations of the different parts of the empire, as it will wish to know where the government stands and where the other parties represented in this house also stand.

May I say that I hope the debate on the address will not be made the occasion for the discussion at length of matters that pertain to external affairs. There is an appropriate time for different subjects to be discussed. I would myself have preferred to say nothing whatever to-day on the matter to which I have just referred if it were not that statements have been made from sources I cannot ignore, and the country is expecting that I should make a statement of the government's position. But there will be during the course of the session an opportunity, when the estimates of the Department of External Affairs are before us, to discuss fully all matters of foreign policy, and I would hope that that would be the time at which such further discussion as may be necessary on some at least of these matters would take place.

I notice in a dispatch from Britain that on January 27 the question was raised in the House of Commons at Westminster as to whether the government did not think a debate on empire affairs at this stage was necessary in view of certain views recently expressed on empire relationship. The acting leader of the house, the deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, said that he thought such a discussion would not at that stage serve a useful purpose, and that other opportunities might come. I mention this simply that hon. members will see I am not taking a different view in suggesting another time

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for the discussion of foreign affairs than in the debate on the address. I am not seeking to rule out such a discussion, but I am seeking indirectly to shorten, if that is possible, the time that most certainly would be taken by such a discussion in the debate on the address.

The question that has come very much to the fore in the last few days is whether there is to be a common policy for all parts of the empire or commonwealth on foreign relations, defence and other matters—a single or common policy as distinct from each nation of the British commonwealth having its own policy on foreign affairs, on defence and on other matters. Let me say at once that, so far as consultation is concerned and cooperation in matters of foreign affairs, defence and the like, as between the different parts of the British empire or the British commonwealth of nations, whichever one prefers to call it, I feel that there cannot be too close consultation and cooperation. I feel that too great an effort cannot be made to ensure careful coordination of these policies, and for my part, wherever opportunity has presented itself in the past or may present itself in the future, I intend to do all that lies within my power to see that there is, among the different nations of the British commonwealth of nations, full consultation, cooperation and coordination, where possible, of all of these particular policies.

I have no very great fear that this consultation and cooperation will not take place. It has steadily grown during the past couple of decades. We have reached to-day an effective method of consultation and cooperation that has not been surpassed at any time in the history of the British empire. It is capable, I believe, in certain particulars, of further development. The whole development, I would say, has been towards perfecting arrangements for effective consultation and cooperation on all matters of common interest and concern.

The suggestion of an organization of the relations between the different self-governing parts of the empire or nations of the commonwealth which would help to centralize their activities is not a new one. It has been made time and again over many years in the past, and each time it has come up for consideration some assurance has been given, where it has been dealt with at imperial conferences or meetings of premiers, that the nations of the commonwealth need not fear in the least any invasion of their complete autonomy in shaping their own policies. I should like to give the house in succession the assurances that have been given at different imperial con-